

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee
FROM: Mary Hess, 89 West Mountain Road, Canton, CT 06019
DATE: February 22, 2017
RE: Restoration of the Regional Mental Health Boards to the 2017 Budget

Please restore Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services funding in the 2017-18 budget for the Regional Mental Health Boards. The Regional Mental Health Boards are mandated by statute to advise DMHAS and to evaluate the essential safety net services for residents of Connecticut. The boards cannot carry out their statutory mandate without DMHAS funding. Further, the Regional Mental Health Boards are a revenue generator for the state. They have successfully leveraged the state funding to attract local, other state agency and federal funding to carry out research, advocacy and program evaluation. Currently, for each dollar of DMHAS funding, the North Central Regional Mental Health Board brings in nearly two additional dollars.

The Regional Mental Health Boards include consumers, family members and providers to assure a full range of perspectives and voices in the planning and implementation of services. This planning model was innovative when first launched in Connecticut in the 1970's, and it has been emulated many times by other state and national groups. Since the inception of the advisory system, the Regional Mental Health Boards have worked with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in a close collaboration as Connecticut has developed a mental health and addiction services system that is the envy of many other states and earns top scores from the National Alliance for Mental Illness rating of the 50 states.

I have been a member of the North Central Regional Mental Health Board since 1981 and have been proud to be part of its excellent work evaluating DMHAS-funded services, promoting new service models for care management and services to young adults, listening to the voices of consumers and family members who depend on the system, and effectively advocating for better services, more service capacity and enhanced access to services. The Regional Mental Health Boards enrich Connecticut's mental health and addiction services system and must not be lost. **Please restore the DMHAS funds that support the Regional Mental Health Boards!**